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CHILDREN'S WISHES

REV. G. WAGNER.

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CHILDREN'S WISHES.

BY THE

REV. GEORGE WAGNER,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH,
BRIGHTON.

"Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."—Ps. xxxvii. 4.

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101. c. 119.

TO THE

Lambs of my beloved Flock,

WITH THE EARNEST PRAYER, THAT

ALL CARNAL AFFECTIONS MAY DIE IN THEM,

AND THAT

ALL THINGS BELONGING TO THE SPIRIT

MAY LIVE AND GROW IN THEM,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

It will be felt at once, that we have entered, in the following pages, on a wide and inexhaustible subject,—an hundred chapters, instead of ten, might have been written on "Children's Wishes." It was thought, however, on every account, to be better not to exceed the present limits of this little volume. Even this feeble endeavour to feed the lambs of Christ's fold, will not be in vain, if it suggest to parents a subject to be followed out in conversations with their children; and if they unite their prayers with ours, that God may graciously bless the following simple words to our youthful readers.

The profits of this little book, if any, will be devoted to a fund for building schools for the poor, in connection with St. Stephen's.

If God should graciously dispose the hearts of any readers of the following pages to help in this good work, their gifts will be gratefully received. There is one way, in which all may assist, and that is, by making known this little work to others.

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Part First.

WRONG WISHES.

JONAH:

Or, the Wish to be Thought Important.

HAVE you ever thought about your own wishes? If not, it is very important that you should think often about them, and find out whether they are pleasing to God, or not. For if you were not to fall into any outward sin, yet, if you indulge *wrong wishes*, they will grieve the Holy Spirit, and harden your heart, and keep you at a distance from God. Have you ever observed a little moth, called the humming-bird hawk moth? The upper wings are a dark brown, and its under wings are yellow. Its body is thick, and large, compared with the size of its wings, and is covered over with feathers that look

like hairs. It flies very fast, and the strange thing is, that it never seems to settle on any flower. The bee, you know, creeps almost into the flower to suck out the honey, and the butterfly sits often for a long time upon it, and spreads out its beautiful wings in the sun. But this little moth draws out the honey from flowers by means of its long trunk, whilst it is hovering over them like a hawk. Now, wrong wishes are very like that little hawk moth; how quickly they come and go, and even if they do not *settle* in the mind, but only seem to hover about it, still they draw out from it a great deal that is good, just as that moth draws out the honey out of the flower, without settling upon it. This is the reason why many people *never* pray with earnestness, nd scarcely ever *fix* their thoughts upona the Word of God, when they read it. Beware, then, my dear reader, of *wrong* wishes.

It is our happy work to try to help *you*

on the way to heaven. We can have "no greater joy," than to be the means of bringing you to Jesus, and, therefore, would we point out more fully some of those *wrong* wishes, against which you must never cease to watch and pray.

The first that we shall choose is the *selfish* wish, or the wish to be *thought important*. Jonah's history proves the sin and the danger of *such* a wish. Every thing, that God does, ought to *please* us. But Jonah was *displeased* at God's ways. If you try to find out the reason, you will see, that it was this. Jonah was *selfish*. He was *self-important*, and would even have preferred, that thousands of his fellow-creatures should have perished, rather than that he should be thought *unimportant*. You will remember that God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. He said, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it," (chap. i. 2). But the prophet did not like to go there, and fled to Tarshish from the presence of

the Lord. How foolish and sinful it was to try to escape from God's presence! Adam and Eve hid themselves from God's presence, because they had done wrong, and their consciences made them afraid to meet God—Jonah fled from God's presence, because he did not like to go to Nineveh. But why did he not like to go there? You will perhaps say, "Nineveh was a very great city. It says (iv. 11) that there were in it more than 120,000 persons, who could not distinguish between their right hand and their left. Had the prophet been told to preach the Gospel to them, he would not have been afraid; but he was told to say, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." He must have been afraid." It must indeed have been a solemn thing to carry such a message to a city containing, as it is calculated, 600,000 heathen. Yet, if it be true that Jonah fled from fear, was it not very foolish and sinful in him to do so? What were 600,000 men compared

to God? The most that *they* could do was to destroy the body. But God could do more. For "He is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," (Matthew x. 28). My dear reader, fear God. Never be led by fear of companions to do what is wrong, or not to do what is right; remember what God says, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth." (Isaiah li. 12). But perhaps it was not *fear*, that led Jonah to flee to Tarshish. Does he himself tell us why he fled? Yes, you will find it in (ch. iv. 2.) Jonah thought within himself, "God tells me to go to Nineveh, and say to them, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.' Perhaps the people of Nineveh will repent, and then God is so gracious and merciful,

that He is sure to forgive and spare them, and so it will seem to them as if I was not God's messenger and prophet." How happy Jonah ought to have been at the thought, that the Ninevites might repent and be saved. But alas! his heart was *selfish.* He wished to seem very *important,* and when he saw that his going to Nineveh might exalt God only, and not himself, he would not go, but fled another way. Oh! how very different he was to Jesus. When the Son of God took a body like ours, and was born in a manger, He knew that He would be despised. He knew that people would say, "Is not this the son of a carpenter?" He knew that when they saw Him suffer, they would not love Him, and sympathise with Him, but would say, "God hath forsaken Him, persecute and take Him, for there is none to deliver Him," (Psalm lxxi. 11). He foresaw, that when He was hanging upon the cross, His enemies would mock and taunt Him with the cruel words,—"He

saved others—Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him, for He said I am the Son of God," (Matthew xxvii. 42, 43). Yet though He foresaw all this, He never turned back—He was willing to be despised, that He might do His Father's will, and save our souls. He did not think of *Himself*, but of God, the Father, and of us. But Jonah thought of *himself*. He could not bear the thought of being supposed to be mistaken, and so he fled. But did God let him fly? No. He sent, you know, a great storm, and Jonah was cast into the angry waves by the mariners to still them. And a large fish was sent by God to swallow him up. But after three days, the disobedient prophet was thrown up by the fish on dry land, (ii. 10). What a judgment, and what a preservation!—what must Jonah have thought, when he was in the whale's

belly? Most likely this wish came into his mind, "Oh! that I had gone to Nineveh, when God told me to go." Well, when he was all safe on dry land, did God let him go home? No: He would be *obeyed*. He said to him, "Arise, go to Nineveh," (iii. 2). And now Jonah went, and preached, as God told him to preach, and the Ninevites *did* repent. Had Jonah's afflictions quite changed him, so that he was glad when he saw them repent? Alas! no. He was still *selfish*, still *self-important*. "It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry," (iv. 1). Oh! what a bad thing it is to have a *selfish*, and *self-important* heart. But God was very patient with Jonah, and spoke kindly to him, and said, "Doest thou well to be angry?" And in order to comfort Jonah, he made a gourd grow up over his head, to shelter him from the sun, (iv. 6). Then Jonah seemed very happy. He was delighted with the gourd—but this was a *selfish* joy, and therefore God

would not allow him to enjoy it long. He sent a little worm, which ate the root of the gourd, and it withered away just as the burning sun began to pour down its beams on the prophet's head, and the hot east wind scorched him. Then Jonah was still more angry, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." My dear young reader, have you ever been angry? What made you angry? Just think now what it was, that made you angry? One, perhaps, will say, "Some one hurt me." That was very wrong, but I hope you forgave him. Another will say, "Some one took what belonged to me." That was very wrong, but I hope you forgave him. Another will say, "Some one laughed at me." That was very wrong, but I hope you have forgiven him. Another will say, "Some one did not treat me, as I ought to be treated." If so, that was very wrong. But do you know exactly *how* you ought to be treated? There are *some* children, who wish to be thought more of

than any one else; they like to be helped first at dinner, and to talk when they please, and to receive great attention, and to be always amused; and when they see others put before them, and meet with more attention than themselves, then, like Jonah, they grow sullen and angry.

A *selfish* and *self-important* child is sure to be passionate—and a passionate child is sure to be unhappy. If then, dear reader, you wish to be happy, you must not be passionate, and if you wish not to be passionate, you must be what St. Paul says (Rom. xii. 3), and not "Think of yourself more highly than you ought to think." You must learn "in honour to prefer others," (v. 10); you must seek to be like Jesus, "meek and lowly in heart," (Matthew xi. 29). When some selfish desire comes into your mind, you must pray to God to cast it out, and to "put into your mind good desires;" when you wish to be thought more of, and to be loved more than others, you should not

indulge it, but go to your secret chamber, and confess that you have had a selfish and sinful thought, and ask God to wash it away in the blood of Jesus, and to give you His Holy Spirit to enable you to overcome it.

A missionary once asked a little girl in South Africa what there was in her heart. She looked very serious and said, "Bad things." The missionary asked her what the bad things were, and she answered, "Obstinacy, envy, and many more, which I do not like to speak of." If you were asked what are the bad things in your hearts, could you tell what they are? Do you think that *selfishness* and *self-importance* is one of them? The missionary then asked what she meant to do with such a heart, and she replied, "I bring it to Jesus every day." And what, said the missionary, can He do with it? With a bright and cheerful look, she exclaimed, "He can wash it. He can put good things in it. Then I shall fret no more." My dear

young friend, follow the example of this little child. Try to find out what "bad things" are in your heart. See whether *selfishness* or *self-importance* is one of them. Then bring your heart to Jesus every day. Whenever a selfish or self-important *wish* rises up in your mind, bring your heart to Jesus. Then God will make you humble and meek, and then you will be satisfied to have the *lowest* place, and then you will be always happy; you will be like Jesus, and He will be with you on earth, and will take you to be with Him in heaven.

HEZEKIAH:

Or, the wish to make a display.

IN the last chapter, dear reader, I spoke to you about Jonah, or the wish to be thought important. In this chapter, I am going to speak to you about a good king of Judah, though you will be sorry to hear, that he did not always think and feel what was right. Who was this king? It was *Hezekiah.* Now the word Hezekiah means something. Do you know what it means? It signifies "strength of Jehovah." You may divide it into two parts: the first part "Hezek," means "strength;" the last part "iah," means Jehovah;" so the two parts together signify "the strength of Jehovah." There is

another name in the Bible, which means nearly the same, "Ezekiel." It signifies "God shall strengthen." Which part of the word, do you suppose, means "God?" The last syllable "el." If you search the Bible, you will find many more words, which end in "iah," so Zechariah, which means "the memorial of Jehovah;" and you will also find many words, which end in "el:" so Bethel, which signifies "the house of God." There are three different parts of the Bible, which tell us the history of Hezekiah. The first is (2 Kings, xviii.—xx.); the next is (2 Chron. xxix.—xxxii.,) and the last is the prophet (Isaiah xxxvi.—xxxix.) You will find it useful to read and to compare them, and then you will know the history of Hezekiah very well. A person was once asked what two chapters in the Bible are exactly alike, word for word; she did not know what to answer. If you will compare the chapters I have mentioned, you will be able to answer this question.

Hezekiah was a good man, his heart was right with God, and he did many things that pleased God. If you turn to (2 Kings xviii. 4,) you will find one thing which he did that pleased God. "He brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made, for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it." If you turn to (2 Chron. xxix. 3,) you will find another thing that he did, which pleased God: "He opened the doors of the house of the Lord," and in (v. 10) of the same chapter, you will find another thing which he did, that also pleased God: "It is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel." If you refer to (chap. xxx. 2) you will find another thing that he did according to God's will: "He took counsel to keep the passover." But though Hezekiah lived to God with all his heart, it pleased God to send him many trials. Does this seem strange to you? If you look at (Heb. xii. 6,) you will see the reason: "For whom the Lord *loveth* He chasten-

eth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." What was Hezekiah's first trial? Sennacherib came against Jerusalem with a very large army; when the king saw his danger, he was very much afraid, and he offered the king of Assyria a large sum of money to go away. Sennacherib took the money and went away; but soon he sent his army back to Jerusalem to take it. Hezekiah had no more money to give, so he did what he ought to have done at first, he cast himself upon God in prayer. You will find his beautiful prayer, (2 Kings xix. 15, 16.) God heard his prayer, and sent an angel, who slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. How happy Hezekiah must have felt to be delivered from his great enemy; but God sent him another trial, He laid him upon a sick bed, and sent the prophet Isaiah to say to him: "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," (2 Kings xx. 1). Why did God send him another trial so soon? The book of Kings does not tell us, and the pro-

phet Isaiah does not tell us, but if you turn to (2 Chron. xxxii. 23,) you will find the true reason. After Sennacherib and his host were smitten, "many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah, king of Judah, so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth." What then was the reason? God saw that all these beautiful presents, and the admiration of so many people, might strengthen the *pride* of Hezekiah's heart, and therefore He sent him a sickness to teach him how very weak and sinful he was. But did Hezekiah die at that time? No, he prayed to God to restore him, and God raised him up. But alas! when he got well, he forgot the warning that God had sent, and when the king of Babylon, Berodach-baladan, sent letters and a present to him, we are told (Isaiah xxxix. 2,) that Hezekiah was "glad of them, and *showed the messengers* everything, that was in his house." He became *vain* of his treasures

and presents, and as it says (2 Chron. xxxii. 25,) "he rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, *for his heart was lifted up.*" It is good, my dear friend, to have our hearts lifted up in prayer; it is good, as we read of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xvii. 6,) "to have our hearts lifted up in the *ways* of the Lord." But it is a sad thing to have them lifted up with *vanity*, as Hezekiah's was. God was displeased with Hezekiah's spirit. He is never pleased with a heart, that is lifted up with *vanity*. He was displeased with the prince of Tyre, because his heart was *lifted up*, (Ezekiel xxviii. 2.) He was displeased with Nebuchadnezzar, when his heart was *lifted up* (Daniel v. 20,) and St. Paul warns us against "being *lifted up with pride*," lest we fall into the snare of the devil, (1 Tim. iii. 6.)

What then was Hezekiah's sin? It was the *wish to display his presents and his treasures.*

This, my dear reader, is a great danger still; some wish to be admired on account of the things they *possess*, some wish to be admired on account of their *appearance*, and others on account of their *knowledge*.

All these wishes grow from *one* root; what do you think it is? *vanity, vanity, vanity!*

Think for a few moments about the first of these.

Perhaps you sometimes receive nice presents on your birthday; may you not feel happy, when you receive such tokens of love? Oh, yes, you may; it would show an unloving and ungrateful heart, if you did not value them. It was not wrong in Hezekiah to value the presents, which neighbouring kings sent him, and there is far more reason to value a present, when given by a kind father or mother, brother or sister, or dear friend; but our hearts are so very sinful, that we must watch them always and in every-

thing, and it is especially needful to do so when those, whom we love, give us nice things. Nothing is *too small* to draw away our hearts from God. If we knew the history of lost souls, we should find that *little* things, *very trifling* things, had much to do with leading them to forget God. There is nothing *too small* to be made the means of bringing us to Jesus; and there is nothing *too small* to injure our precious souls. If then, my young friend, you receive the kind presents of those, who love you, with thankfulness towards God, and humility towards man; if you think of God's most precious gift to us, His own beloved Son, then, whatever you have, it will not hurt you. But if you set your heart on presents or money, and begin to wish others to admire you, because you have so many beautiful things, then your heart, like Hezekiah's, is being *lifted up*. *Vanity* is working within you, and God is displeased.

Shall I tell you an anecdote of a little

boy, who made a good use of a birthday present, and was not vain like Hezekiah. The lady, who wished to give him a present, did not know what to buy for him, so she gave him the money, which she had intended to lay out in purchasing something for him. Now, many a boy would have said, "What shall I buy for myself with this money?" and it would not have been wrong to say so. But this little boy made a nobler use of it. It so happened, that his father was building a church at that time. So, as soon as the money was given him, he said, "I will give it to that church; how pleased I shall be, if I can only add one stone to it."

Again, some wish to make a *display* in their *outward appearance*. This wish, also, is very dangerous. If you will turn to (Col. iv. 5,) you will find what use we ought to make of time. The words are, "Redeeming the time." Do you understand what that means? It signifies buying up the time —making use of every opportunity. Now

those, who indulge the empty wish to dis-play themselves, spend much of the time, which ought to be given to prayer and reading the Bible, in adorning the outer man. If you will look at (1 Peter iii.) you will see what is the most beautiful ornament in God's sight. He first tells us what God does *not* value (verse 3). It is not "outward adorning, or wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel." And then in (v. 4,) he tells us what God *does* value. What is it? The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. My dear young friend, seek earnestly, very earnestly, that beautiful and lasting ornament—a meek and quiet spirit. Other ornaments will all pass away, but this lasts for ever. It will shine in all its beauty in heaven. And if your hearts are set upon this ornament, and you pray earnestly for it, you will not think too much about outward adorning, and will take more pleasure in denying yourself *little things*, that you

may give to others, than in buying things for yourselves.

Thirdly, others wish to be admired on account of their *knowledge*. When this is the case, the words of St. Paul are fulfilled, which you will find in (1 Cor. viii. 1,) "knowledge puffeth up." This also is a dangerous wish. If a person wishes to appear to know a great deal, two bad effects are sure to follow—first, he will remain ignorant of many things, because he will be ashamed to confess his ignorance, and to ask questions; and, secondly, he will pretend to know much, that he does not know, and thus will fall into the sin of deceit. St. Paul gives us one mark of real ignorance, (1 Cor. viii. 2), "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." And the true mark of wisdom is humility; in the words of St. Paul (Rom. xii. 16), "Be not wise in your own conceit." Perhaps you have read the striking words of one, who was rightly

thought the wisest man of all the Greeks. He said—"If there is any difference between me and others, it is this. They think falsely, that they know much. I know, that I know nothing."

And now, my dear reader, how can these three sinful wishes be kept out of your heart, how can vanity and pride be destroyed? Perhaps you will say, "I must pray." True, you must pray against them. If you receive a nice present, pray that your heart may not be lifted up, like Hezekiah's. When you are gaining knowledge, pray that you may feel, that you "know nothing as you ought to know." When tempted to think too much of the adorning of the body, pray for the ornament of a "meek and quiet spirit." See what St. Paul says (1 Thess. v. 17), "pray without ceasing;" see what St. Peter says (1 Ep. iv. 7), "watch unto prayer." But is prayer all? No, dear child; you must keep close to Jesus by faith. There are two very dreadful things. The one is, to

leave God; the other is, to have God *leave* us. How was it that Hezekiah's heart was lifted up?" Turn to (2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) It says "God *left him* to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." God does not love to leave his children. Come, then, my young friend, to Jesus, and abide in Him.

Two gentlemen were once walking in Switzerland, in a beautiful valley, between two high mountain-chains, and as they were going along, a shepherd drove a large number of goats into the narrow path just before them. There was a low wall, made of rough stones, on each side of the path, and the active goats jumped up on the wall, as they were driven along, to eat the leaves of shrubs, and anything that they could reach. They knew that they did wrong, for when they jumped down into the path again, they were afraid to come near the shepherd. But there was one little goat that kept quite close to the shepherd. It did not try to jump upon the

wall, or turn aside to eat, but always walked just at the heels of the shepherd—where the shepherd went, it went, when the shepherd stopped, it stopped—and so, whilst the other goats were afraid, it did not fear the shepherd. So, dear child, follow Jesus—keep close to Jesus, for He is *your* Shepherd. Pray that His precious blood may purge *your* conscience, and purify *your* heart, and then you will trust and not be afraid, and then your heart will not be "lifted up," but be meek and lowly.

PETER;

Or, the wish to know what does not concern us.

If you look, my young friend, at the beginning of the 21st chapter of St. John's Gospel, you will see that seven of the disciples went out fishing together. You will perhaps say, "where does it say, that there were *seven* disciples together?" In the second verse. It tells us the names of three. One was Simon Peter, who denied Jesus, but afterwards repented. Another was Thomas, who for a time would not believe that Jesus had risen, but afterwards said, "My Lord and my God." Another was Nathaniel, who once said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" but afterwards he said,

(John i. 49), "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." Then the two sons of Zebedee were there; you know their names, do you not? James and John. And there were two other disciples, whose names we do not know. These seven went out fishing, but for a long time they caught nothing. But who, do you think, went to them? Jesus, we are told (v. 4) stood on the shore, and then they caught a great many fishes. They must have been very tired with spreading their nets so often, and so Jesus kindly told them to eat. And when they had eaten and were refreshed, He turned to Peter, and asked him the same touching question three times. Do you remember what it was? You will find it in (v. 15,) "Lovest thou Me?" What did Peter answer? "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Suppose, my dear reader, that Jesus were to take *you* aside, and ask *you* this question, what should *you* answer? Could *you* say, "Thou knowest

that I love Thee." Oh, are there not some here, who love their parents, and brothers, and sisters; and yet there is *One*, whom they do not love! They do not love Jesus, though He died for them.

Did Christ say anything more to Peter? Yes, look at (v. 18:) "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." What did He mean? He meant that ungodly men would seize Peter, and drag him away to a cross, and crucify him, like his Master. *We* do not know exactly how *we* shall die. Some of us may die suddenly, and some may have a long illness first. Some of us may suffer very much in dying, and some scarcely at all. But Peter knew beforehand how *he* would die. Now when he knew *how* he would die *himself*, he wished to know how John

would die. Seeing John following, he said to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" What was it, that made Peter ask such a question? It was *curiosity*. Did Jesus tell him? No; He said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

I have told you already, my young friend, about some *wrong* wishes. To-day let us think about another *wrong* wish, "the wish to know what does not concern us." Is it not a very common wish?

There are two kinds of *curiosity;* one is right, and the other is wrong. Let me first explain the difference between a right and wrong curiosity, and then give you some common instances of the last, "the wish to know what does not concern us."

First, then, there is a curiosity that is right. God Himself has planted it in our hearts. It is a desire to know what *does* concern us—to know all the beautiful works of God, and above all to know God Himself. Moses had this curiosity.

He was a learned man, and tried to get all the knowledge that he could from books. Turn to (Acts vii. 22,) where you will find what Stephen says of him, "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." But was this the only way, that he tried to gain knowledge? No: he observed carefully all, that he saw around him. One day, you remember, he was walking near Mount Horeb, and to his great surprise he observed a bush burning; he watched it, and saw that it was not burnt up. Now some careless people would not have observed it, or have gone up to it, as Moses did, when he said, "I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt," and how much they would have lost! they would not have heard the words (Exod. iii. 6), "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," or have received the beautiful assurance (v. 7), "I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which

are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters, for I know their sorrows." It was *curiosity* that led Moses to examine the burning bush, but it was a *good* curiosity. I once knew a little boy, who had this kind of curiosity; when he was only seven years old, he used to get up before it was light, and wait at his window until the sun rose, that he might prepare his Bible lesson. One day his mother said to him, "I think that you know enough now." "Oh no," he said, "I wish to know everything." Cultivate, my dear young friend, this *good* curiosity. You may learn a great deal from books, and you may learn much by examining everything you see. You never take a walk into the fields, or by the sea, without being surrounded by great wonders. Look up to the stars; how wonderful they are! Look around you on the ever-changing sea, or on the varied flowers of spring, and what marks there are of God's hand in all! If you

see things, which you cannot understand, do not be afraid to ask questions. A good teacher always likes to be asked questions.

But there is a higher knowledge than that of created things. It is the knowledge of God Himself, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Bible tells us all, that we want to know about God. How much this knowledge concerns us! It concerns us to know about heaven, the happy place which God has prepared for His people; and about hell, the place of everlasting punishment; about God, who loved us so much as to give us His own Son; and about Jesus, away from whom we can have no forgiveness; and about the Spirit, without whom our hearts must be hard and unholy. Yet some persons seldom read their Bible; and others, who read it more frequently, do not pay attention to what they read, and know very little of the will of God or the way of salvation, though they have read it for years. Do you remember the

request of the wise men? You will find it (Matt. ii. 2,) "Where is He that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him?" They were truly wise. Do you remember the request of the Greeks? Turn to (John xii. 21,) "Sir, we would see Jesus." *They* desired the best knowledge. Do you remember the anxious inquiry of the awakened jailer? (Acts xvi. 30,) "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" *He* asked the most important question, which the lips can utter. Shall I tell you an anecdote of two little boys, who loved the Bible, because it gave them the knowledge of the best things?

These two boys were brothers, one was eleven, and the other thirteen years old. Both their parents died in London of nervous fever, and the poor orphans, deprived of everything, started off to walk to Liverpool, where an uncle lived. They came to an inn in a town on their way, but they had no money. The master of

the inn saw, that they had a little packet, and asked them to open it. What do you think, that it contained? A nice Bible, and nothing else. So he said, "As you have no money for your journey, I will give you five shillings for that Bible." "No," said one of the little boys with tears, "I would rather die of hunger." The master offered him six shillings. "No," said the same boy, "I will not sell it for anything. This Bible has been my only comfort in my journey; when I was so tired that I could not walk, I sat down and read my Bible, and that always did me good." "Suppose," said the master, that your uncle will not take you in, when you reach his house." "I have read," said the little boy, "in my Bible, 'When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'" May you, my dear young friend, love *your* Bible as that little boy did, and have the same *good* curiosity, the *blessed desire* to know Christ.

Now let me pass on to *wrong* curiosity, or the wish to know what does *not* concern us.

There are some persons who wish to know, what God has *not* revealed in the Bible. Instead of trusting in God's word and resting satisfied, they say "Why does God do this? why did not God do that? why does God tell me to act thus?" Those "whys" are very bad. What God has done and does, ***must*** be right; what He tells us to do, ***must*** be the very best thing for us. But God does not answer those "whys;" He wishes us to trust in Him. When Jesus was about to wash the feet of His disciples, He came first to Simon Peter. Peter did not like Jesus to wash His feet. Did Christ explain to His disciple *why* He wished to wash his feet? No. See what He said (John xiii. 7), "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." It is as if He had said to Peter, "Do not ask reasons; trust in me, and yield to my will."

When then, my dear child, it pleases God not to give you what you want, or to send you some trial, do not reason about it, and indulge vain curiosity, but pray that you may feel, "It is all well." It is God's doing, and what He does is always wise and merciful.

Now take another instance. What is your duty towards your parents? You will say, in the words of the fifth commandment, "to honour my father and my mother." And how must you honour them? By *obedience*. Turn to (Eph. vi. 1,) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." Now some children, when they are told by a parent or teacher to do something, look sad, and annoyed, and say, "Oh *why* must I do that?" Is that obedience? No; obedience never uses the little word "why;" obedience does not murmur; obedience asks no questions; obedience is not sullen, but cheerful and bright. My dear child, there are many questions which you *may*

ask your parents and teachers. You may ask about the beautiful works of God; you may ask the meaning of different passages in the Bible; you may ask about Jesus, about His sufferings, and His crown. But there is *one* question which you must *never* ask; you must *never* say "*why* must I do as you tell me?" To ask such a question is to wish to know what does *not* concern you.

Before I give you the next instance of wrong curiosity, I must tell you that it is not a danger to you at *present*, but when you are a few years older, it may become one, and when it does become a danger to you, perhaps you may remember what you once read, when you were young. What kind of curiosity is it, do you think? It is that *curiosity*, which leads people to wander about to hear different preachers, instead of keeping to one church. Some are attracted by eloquence—some even go to see and hear what they knowbeforehand, that they will not approve.

Now, a minister of Christ ought to preach

the truth as it is in Jesus. He should speak according to the word of God, and should prove what he says by Scripture. And what should his hearers do? If he says anything contrary to Scripture, it is their *solemn duty* not to receive it. They are told (1 Thess. v. 21,) to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." But whatever is in accordance with Scripture they should receive, as the Thessalonians did (1 Ep. ii. 13) "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God;" and in meekness, as St. James says (i. 21,) "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." But those, whom curiosity leads to wander about to listen to eloquence, or hear some new thing, soon lose all humility and meekness. They get to think more of fine words, and of the *manner* of the minister, than of the *truth* which he preaches; they go to hear the voice of man, and they *do* hear it, but not the *voice of God.* Dear young friend, come to the house of God now in a spirit of prayer.

Come to meet Jesus. Come to listen to God's voice; and when you are older, value the truth as it is in Jesus above everything else, and do not fall into the snare so common in these days, of wandering about to hear eloquent words or new doctrines.

There is one more kind of wrong curiosity, which must not be left out; it is curiosity about the *concerns* of others. A spirit which leads people to find out all they *can* about their neighbours. St. Paul condemns this kind of curiosity (2 Thess. ii. 11,) "For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies." And once more, (1 Tim. v. 13,) "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not." This kind of curiosity leads persons to talk almost entirely *about others*. It generally shows an empty mind, and seems, when in-

dulged, to make the mind more empty. The best cure for this is to be earnest in seeking your *own* salvation; to pray much to God, and to gain useful knowledge. If you, dear child, are ever tempted to be inquisitive about the *concerns of others*, and to talk of them, remember the words of Jesus, "What is that to thee, follow *thou* me." Yes, what does Jesus say to you, dear young friend? Do you not hear His voice? He says, "Follow *thou* me." He says to the youngest reader of this book, as well as to the eldest, "Follow *thou* me."

Oh, then, follow Jesus. Follow Him *now*, without any delay. Do not say in your hearts, "I will follow Him to-morrow." No, turn to (2 Cor. vi. 2) "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Follow Him by faith; follow Him by obedience; follow Him in prayer; follow Him with all your heart; follow Him all your life; follow Him in all places—whilst you are at your studies, and

whilst you are taking exercise—when you are alone, and when you are in company. If some bosom-sin wishes to be indulged, say, "No, I must follow Jesus." If any companion or friend tries to keep you back, say, "No, I am *resolved* to follow Jesus." Follow Him, because He is so gentle, because He is so faithful, because He is so full of love. Follow Him, because His precious blood can wash away all your sins, and His Spirit can make you holy. Follow Him on earth, and then in *Heaven* you will be permitted to "follow the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth."

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA:

Or, the wish to be thought better than we are.

WE have considered already some bad wishes. There is another bad wish, which we ought to keep out of our hearts: the *wish to appear better than we really are.* Do you know what happened on the day of Pentecost? God poured out His promised Spirit upon the disciples. Then Peter began to preach at once to others, and God gave the Spirit to many, who heard him, so that in one day, three thousand souls were added to the church. What did those Jews feel, when the Spirit first came into their hearts? If you will refer to (Acts ii. 37), you will see. "Now when they heard this, they were *pricked in*

their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?" This, then, was the first effect of the Spirit's descent upon them. They were *pierced* in their hearts, and felt that their past lives had been sinful, and all wrong. What was the next effect of the Spirit's coming? Look (at v. 41,) "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." The Spirit then enabled them to believe God's promises, and to receive them gladly, with great joy. This was the second effect. What was the third? They were all filled with love to each other. There was no quarrelling or disputing, but they were all, as it tells us, (chap. iv. 32,) "of one heart and of one soul." So very great was their love to Jesus and to each other, that they did not keep any of their property to themselves, but sold it, that the Apostles might be able to relieve the wants of the poorer brethren, as well as their own. It says (iv. 34,) "Neither was there any among

them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles' feet, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." Try to remember these *three* effects of the Spirit; first they were convinced of sin, then they believed God's promises, then they loved Jesus, and because they loved Jesus, they loved each other. And ask yourself, my dear reader, "Do I feel my sins very much?" Do I believe in God's precious promises? And do I love Jesus and others very much?"

Now, there were two persons, who *seemed* to believe as well as the others, and they were baptized. They *seemed* to love Jesus and their brethren, and when they saw other Christians, and that good man Barnabas, sell their lands and houses, they thought that they would do the same. So they sold a posssession. Thus far it was well. But then a *dreadful* wish came

into Ananias's heart, and he told it to his wife Sapphira, and she did not dissuade him from it, as she ought to have done, but indulged that sinful wish. What was it? It was to give *only a part* of the money to the Apostles, pretending that it was *all*, that they had received, and to keep the remainder for themselves. They forgot, that God saw them, and thought, that they could deceive the Apostles and the whole Church of Christ, though it was filled with the Holy Ghost. But their sin very soon found them out, as it always does. God enabled Peter to see into their dark hearts, and he said earnestly to Ananias, "Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" and told him, that he had not only lied to the Church, but to the Holy Ghost. You know the dreadful punishment that followed. Ananias was struck dead first, and three hours after, the sinful Sapphira was struck dead too, because she persisted in telling a lie, instead of confessing her sin. Now, why

did Ananias and Sapphira act in this sinful way? Were they obliged to sell their property? No, not at all. God did not command them to do so, and Peter did not ask them to sell it. Look at (v. 4,) where Peter says, "Whilst it remained, was it not thine own?" And even after they had sold it, they might have kept all the money themselves; and so the Apostle adds, "After it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" Why, then, did they do it? It was because they *wished to appear as good as others*, and *better than they really were*. They did not like people to say to them, "See! Ananias and Sapphira do not love others, as Barnabas does," and yet they were *covetous*, and did not like to give up *all* they had. Because they wished to appear as good and full of love of others, they sold their property, but because they loved money more than Jesus and their brethren, they kept back part of the price. You see, then, what was the *root* of their sin. It was the *sinful wish*

to appear better than they really were. Do you remember any one else in Scripture, who wished to appear better, than he really was? You will find out who it was, if you turn to (1 Sam. xv). It was Saul, the king of Israel. God told him to go and smite the Amalekites with the edge of the sword. So Saul went and smote a great many of them, but he did not kill them quite all. It says (v. 9) that he "spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them." This was very sinful. Saul was as really disobedient as if he had killed none. How many people are like Saul in this! If they keep *part* of a commandment, they hope that God will be satisfied, and will not mark the other part, which they have broken. Then Samuel came to find out the disobedient king, but Saul went boldly up to him and said, (v. 13,) "Blessed art thou of the Lord; I have *performed* the commandment of the Lord."

Oh, how untrue that was! Why did Saul tell such a falsehood? He did not like Samuel to know, how sinfully he had acted. He wished to appear *better than he was.* Was Samuel deceived? Oh, no, he said, (v. 14) "What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" But even *then* Saul would not confess his sin, but threw all the blame upon the people; he said in (v. 15), "*They* have brought them from the Amalekites; for the *people* spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God;" and what does he add, "The rest *we*," observe, not *they*, but *we*, "have utterly destroyed;" that is, he lays all the *fault* of saving Agag, and some of the cattle, on the *people*, but claims the reward of obedience *himself.* My young friend, these two sad instances of Ananias and Sapphira, and of Saul, will show, how *sinful* and *dangerous* it is to *wish to be thought better than we are.* It is very sinful, because it shows that we care much

more what *men* think of us, than what *God* sees in us. And it is *full* of danger too. For, if you indulge this *sinful wish*, it will lead you to say more than you *feel* about God, and then you grieve the Spirit, and your heart will grow hard. It will also lead you to do many things, as it did the Pharisees, just to make people think how *good* and *holy* you are. When you pray, you will not be thinking, "God sees me now, and He has promised to hear me," but you will be hoping, that some one is looking at you. But see what Jesus says, (Matt. vi. 5, 6). And when you give anything to the poor or suffering, the same sinful wish will make you desire it to be known, that others may admire your generosity. See, again, what Jesus says, (Matt. vi. 1—3.) The same wish will lead you to *conceal* your sins and faults, when you ought to confess them; because the thought will come into your mind, "Oh, if I confess, people will not think me *good* any longer." I do not know,

my dear child, whether these thoughts touch your heart. If your conscience is burthened with sin, oh! go and open your heart to God. Ask Jesus to wash it in His own blood, and do not be ashamed to confess what you have done, to your parents, or teacher, or minister. Do not let that sinful wish to appear good, keep you from telling the whole truth.

Let me tell you an anecdote. There was once a little boy, whose name was Theodore Heppel: he lived about a hundred years ago. He used to love prayer, when he was only six years old. One afternoon, however, he went out with a little sister to take tea with a neighbour—he was in high spirits, and talked a great deal, and what do you think? he told a *lie*. His conscience made him very unhappy at once; he felt that he ought to confess, that he had said what was wrong, but something, perhaps the sinful wish, about which we have been speaking, prevented him from confessing it. He went

home, but he was so miserable that he could not bear to be alone. He tried to pray, but could not, because he felt that he ought to confess his sin. At night he could not sleep, and by day he could not eat. Fever came on, and he was obliged to go to bed; he got worse and worse, until at last he determined to open his heart to his mother; he called her to his bedside, he confessed his sin, and entreated her to go and tell the neighbour, in whose presence he had uttered it. Then he found peace. The burden was removed from his conscience, and he soon recovered from the fever. Have you, dear reader, the burden of an unconfessed lie upon your conscience? Oh! go without delay and do likewise. Would you like to hear another anecdote? There were once two little German children, a brother and sister. The name of the one was William, the name of the sister was Hannchen. When they were good children, their mother used to let them play in the garden, but she

always told them not to touch the fruit, which grew on the trees. One day, after they had had a good game, they began to walk round the garden, and to look at the beautiful fruit, and, as they were walking, they came to a spot, where there was a young cherry-tree. It was the very first year, that this cherry-tree had borne fruit, and the cherries looked very delicious. They were quite ripe, but their mother would not have them gathered, until the father returned from a journey. What do you think they saw on the ground underneath the little tree? Two cherries. William thought nothing of his mother's command, and took one and ate it, and gave the other to Hannchen, who ate it likewise. No sooner, however, had she eaten it, than she cried out, "Dear William, what will mamma say? what shall we do?" William replied, "She does not know it." Then the little girl said, "Oh, but she must know it; you know that she always forgives us, when we con-

fess our faults." "But," added William, "we have been disobedient, and you know that she always punishes disobedience." "And if she does punish us," said Hannchen, "she always does it in love; besides, how we shall blush for shame, when she kisses us and calls us good children, and we do not deserve it." "You know better than I, dear sister," said William, "let us go and confess our fault." So they went together, and, when they came to their mother, the little girl said, "Dearest mother, we have been very disobedient, do punish us." And then William related all the circumstances. The mother was glad that they had confessed their fault, and forgave them. These dear children, you see, were not kept from confessing their sin, by the *sinful wish to appear better* than they were.

If then, my dear young friend, you ought not to indulge the wish to appear better than you are, what ought you to wish? Oh! wish to know Jesus (Phil. iii.

10), wish to believe *in* Jesus (John vi. 29), wish to love Jesus (1 Cor. xvi. 22), wish to be like Jesus (Rom. viii. 29), wish to be *in* Jesus now (Rom. viii. 1), wish to dwell with Jesus hereafter (John xvii. 24), wish to be enlightened by the Spirit (Eph. i. 18), wish to be taught by the Spirit (John vi. 45), wish to live in the Spirit (Gal. v. 25) wish to be led by the Spirit (Rom. viii. 14), wish to have the Spirit bear witness with your spirit, that you are the children of God (Rom. viii. 16), wish to know God the Father, as *your* Father (John xvii. 3), wish to be able to say, in trouble and in joy, "Abba, Father," (Rom. viii. 15). *Desire* these things, and then our earnest prayer for you will be *that*, which you will find, (Ps. xx. 4.) "Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel."

THE MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S CHILDREN:

Or, the wish to be great.

All mothers have wishes for their children. Some wish their children to be very clever; others wish their children to be very rich; others wish their children to rise to a higher station in life, than their own; others wish their children to be admired. Are these good wishes? No. For a child may be very clever, and yet love sin; a child may become very rich, and therefore forget God; a child may get into better society than that, in which his parents have been, and yet know nothing of Jesus; a child may be admired by very many, and yet be

under God's displeasure. Such wishes, if granted, will not make you happy, my dear child, for they are all for *this* world. If you wish to be really happy, you must be prepared for *another* world, prepared to die—prepared to meet God, as it says (Amos iv. 12), "Prepare to meet thy God." It was a far more blessed wish, that the mother of Zebedee's children had for her two sons. She was the wife of a fisherman, and her two sons were fishermen also, as you will see, if you turn to (Matt. iv. 21), where it says, that Jesus "going on from thence, saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets." It is not likely that they were rich; yet their mother did not ask Jesus to make them rich. She wanted something better for them. She believed that Jesus, poor and despised as he seemed to be, was a King. She thought that He would have a glorious kingdom, and her desire was,

that her two sons might have the highest places in His kingdom. So she came to Jesus, bringing her two sons with her; and she said, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom, (Matt. xx. 21). Do you ask, "did James and John wish for the same thing also?" for very often the wishes of mothers and the wishes of children do not agree. Yes, they wished to sit there too. There are some words in the verse which follows that just quoted, which prove this. Jesus asked them a question. He said, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" What cup, and what baptism did he mean? Turn to (Luke xxii. 42,) and you will see what cup is meant. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove *this cup* from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." It is the cup of *suffering*. A cup may hold something, that tastes very

good; or it may contain something very disagreeable, which you would not like to drink; and therefore the word "*cup*" sometimes means joy and blessing, and sometimes sorrow and suffering. So David in (Ps. xxiii. 5,) says, with his heart full of *joy*, "my cup runneth over." But when Jesus speaks of "His cup" (v. 23), "ye shall indeed drink of my cup," He means the cup of *suffering*, and so also His baptism does not mean a baptism of water, but of blood. He was baptised with water in Jordan. He was baptised in blood on the cross. Now if James and John did not wish to sit on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom, what would they have answered to that question? "Oh no, we cannot." But what did they answer? "We are able." And if you turn to Mark, you will see that they are represented as asking this for themselves, (ch. x. 35—37). All three then desired the same thing. We are not told anything about the father; but

the mother and two sons had *all* the same wish. This wish, we have seen, was much better than *many* wishes, which parents have for their children. But was it *altogether* a good wish? We fear not. Some evil was mixed up with the good. There was an *ambitious* thought in it. She wished her sons to be *great*. It would have been a blessed wish indeed, if she had only desired to bring her sons to Jesus—a blessed request, if she had asked for them a place in the many mansions. But she wanted more. She wished to see them occupying the two highest places in Christ's kingdom.

The desire to be *great*, is deeply rooted in our hearts. Look, my dear young reader, at *your own* heart. Think of your past and present wishes. Have you never desired to be *greater* than others? You ought to desire to gain knowledge, and improve yourselves, because this is the will of God; but have you ever taken pains with your studies, only because you wished

to pass by others, and get first? This was not a right motive. Have you wished to excel in any thing else, in some game for instance, in order that others might *think much* of you? Remember, my young friend, that you ought always to try to do thoroughly well, whatever you do. *If a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well;* and to do a thing well, we must always take pains. Make it a rule, then, to do every thing *as well as possible.* But why? Not that you may gain the admiration of others, not that you may be *greater* than others, but that you may *please God.* The motive makes all the difference. If you try to improve yourselves, and to gain knowledge, because it is the will of God, then you will not be puffed up; you will be kept always humble. But if you wish to be *greater than others,* then you will be puffed up, when others praise you. This wish leads to all sorts of sinful feelings and acts. It causes envy; it produces strife, and has even led

to murder. There are many persons, whose outward lives are generally good, *but the wish to be great* is the root of bitterness within them. Look at the disciples. What a beautiful example of humility they had before their eyes. See Jesus stooping down to wash their feet; hear Him speaking so kindly to them, (John xiii. 14, 15), "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Could *they* ever forget it? Could *they* wish to be greatest? Alas! they did. More than once they quarrelled about it. Turn to (Luke ix. 46)—"Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest." And when was this? When they ought to have been *very* humble. For it was only a short time before, that Jesus was transfigured before three of them. And what did Jesus say, when He knew what they had been doing? He took a child, and set him up by Him,

and said unto them, "whosoever shall receive this child in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth Him that sent Me; for he that is *least among you, the same shall be great.*" Now turn to (Luke xxii. 24—27.) When was this? It was, again, just when they ought to have been most humble. They had just received the Lord's Supper, and Jesus had been speaking to them about His crucifixion, and told them, that one should betray Him. This was not a time to quarrel; but it was the sad desire to be *greatest,* that led them to dispute among themselves. What was it that nourished the pride of Nebuchadnezzar's heart? It was the thought of his *greatness.* Refer to (Daniel iv. 29, 30.) "At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" But God, who exalts the

humble, abased the proud monarch of Babylon, as we read, (ver. 31), "while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." The wish to be great was the besetting sin of Simon Magus. We read (Acts viii. 9), that "he bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one," and all the people in Samaria gave heed to him, saying, "This man is the great power of God." And even after he believed, and was baptized, this sinful wish had dominion in his heart. His request to Peter (ver. 19), shows it. "Give me also," he said, "this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive

the Holy Ghost." The wish to be great was the besetting sin of Diotrephes; as St. John says (3rd Epis. 9), "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." And remember, my dear young friend, that it is not only in worldly things, that you are in danger of wishing to be great. This wish may mix itself up with spiritual things. It is so difficult to overcome sin, that people often change one sin for another. They will lay aside the desire for *worldly greatness*, and take up in its place the desire for *spiritual power*. But look at St. Paul, how humble he was. Refer to (Eph. iii. 8,) "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." How lowly in heart was the great Shepherd of the sheep! He was exalted in heaven, and yet made Himself of no reputation. He was a king, yet wore no crown. He stooped so low as to wash the feet of His own disciples.

And to pass to a very different instance: There was a beautiful humility in the prayer of the penitent thief. Did he ask for a high place in heaven? or to sit at the right hand, or the left? Oh! no. "Lord, *remember* me," he prayed, "when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." He wished for one thing, and one only, "*to be remembered* by Jesus." Do you wish for this? Is this your prayer, "Lord, remember me."

A missionary in the West Indies was walking out one day, and as he came near a wood, he heard a groan. He went to the spot from which it came, and what do you think he found? An old savage, lying on the ground. He was weak, and seemed to be dying. The missionary spoke to him. At first he gave no answer. At last he said in a sorrowful tone: "This morning early I started, and hoped to reach home, but I lost my way, and it is now almost dark. I am exhausted, and here I must remain, where there are snakes,

and wild beasts, and where my enemies will find and kill me. Oh! my poor wife, my poor children." The missionary felt compassion, and took him home. First he gave him some food, and then made up a bed for him, very near his own, with only a thin curtain between. In the night the missionary was aroused by a noise. What was it? It was the savage getting up. For what? The missionary was afraid, and thought that the savage meant to kill him. He kept quite still, and listened; and what did he hear? A sharp knife drawn to kill him? Oh! no. A prayer; this prayer—"O God, I thank Thee, that Thou hast caused Thy sun to shine upon me on my way. I thank Thee, that no snake has bitten me, no wild beast attacked me, no enemy met me. I thank Thee, that this kind friend was sent me, and has brought me into his hut. O God, when this stranger, or his friend, or his children, are on a journey, cause Thy sun to shine upon them, take them under Thy protec-

tion, and if they wander from their path, and become exhausted, let some one come to their help, and take them into their hut." When the missionary heard this prayer, he prayed also. For what did he pray? For a high place in heaven? No. "Grant me, O God," he said, "a place near this Indian in Thy kingdom."

Do not, then, my dear young friend, seek *great* things for yourself. Beware of *ambitious wishes*, both in *worldly* and in *spiritual* things. Pray that you may be *like Jesus*, meek and lowly in heart, *like St. Paul*, who felt himself to be "less than the least of all saints," and "the chief of sinners." Ask for an heart that rests on Jesus, and wants *nothing more*. And whilst you pray for humility, endeavour to practise it in all the *little things* of life. Do not exalt yourselves above your companions and friends, but willingly for Christ's sake give up the highest place, and the best things to others. It is very difficult for our selfish hearts to act thus;

but God will enable you to do it by His Spirit, if you pray to Him; and then you will be very happy, your mind will be calm, you will not become angry, as many do, you will not quarrel; and whilst you see all around you very wonderful things, there is one thing, which will seem to you more wonderful than all, that God should give *you* even the *lowest place* in His kingdom.

Part Second.

RIGHT WISHES.

NEHEMIAH;

Or, the Desire to fear God.

I HAVE spoken to you, my dear young friend, about several *wrong* wishes. Can you remember any of them? Perhaps you will say, "Yes. One was 'the wish to be thought important.' Another was, 'the wish to make a display.' Another was, 'the wish to know what does not concern us.' Another was, 'the wish to appear better than we are;' and another was, 'the wish to be great.'" Have you overcome *one* of these bad wishes? If you have, thank God for it. And now try to overcome another bad wish—do not stop, but get them all out of your heart, either one by one, or all at once. Do you

think, that I have told you all the bad wishes, that there are? Are there only five? Oh, no! there are a great many more. Shall I tell you two or three more? Yes, I will just mention them. There is the "revengeful wish," such as Esau had, when he resolved to kill his brother. There is the *wrong* wish for the *right* thing, which Jacob had, when he got his brother's blessing by means of deceit. There is the *impatient* wish, such as the Israelites had, when they longed to be back again in Egypt. There is the wish for the *praise* of men, such as the Pharisees had, and which kept them from believing in Jesus. But I shall not write about any more *bad* wishes. It is not enough to get *wrong* wishes out of your mind, but you must try to get *right* wishes into it.

Suppose you had a garden which was very full of weeds. What would you do? Pull them up, would you not? But when you had pulled them up, what would you do? Nothing more? O yes, you would

plant flowers in their places. Now, you have heard already about some weeds, which you ought to pull up at once. Now let me tell you about some flowers, which you can plant instead—some *good wishes* I will begin with a wish, which Nehemiah had. It was the "desire to fear God." He says of himself, and of some other Jews with him, "who desire to fear Thy name," (Neh. i. 11). This was a very good desire. There are three points in these few words, which I will explain as clearly as I can.

The first is the name of God—"Thy name." The second is, what *fear* it is, that Nehemiah means, to "*fear* Thy name." And the third and last is, the *desire* itself —"who *desire* to fear Thy name."

What was the first thing to be explained? "The name of God."

Perhaps some one will ask, "What name of God was it, that Nehemiah desired to fear?" for there are many names given to God in Scripture. If you turn

to (Exodus iii. 14), you will find one name of God. "And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and He said, This shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, 'I AM hath sent me unto you." Was it the name "I AM" that Nehemiah wished to fear? In the next verse (the 15th) you will find another name of God. "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations." Was it of this name, that Nehemiah thought? If you turn to (Exodus vi. 3), you will find two other names in one verse. The first is "God Almighty;" the second is "Jehovah." "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of *God Almighty*; but by My name *Jehovah* was I not known unto them." Was it one of these names, which Nehemiah wished to fear? No; it was not any *one single name,* but *God Himself*, whom he wished to

fear. God's name means God Himself, and this is the reason why so much is said about God's name in the Bible. David calls that name *great* and *holy*, (Psa. xcix. 3), "Let them praise Thy great and terrible name, for it is holy." God's name is called *great, terrible,* and *holy,* because *God Himself* is so. God's name is called *everlasting,* (Isa. lxiii. 12), "to make Himself an *everlasting* name," because God Himself is *everlasting.* God's name is called *glorious*, (v. 14), to "make Thyself a *glorious* name," because God's being is *glorious.* The name of God is said to defend us, (Psa. xx. 1), "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," because God Himself defends His people. And Solomon says, that the name of God is a "strong tower," (Prov. xviii. 10), "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe," which means, that God Himself shelters His people. It is not, therefore, any one name of God, that Nehemiah desired to fear, but God

Himself, as made known to us by all these beautiful names. To fear God's name is to fear God; and not to fear God's name, is not to fear God.

Now, let us go on to the second point, and explain what *kind* of fear it was, that Nehemiah felt, when he used the words, "Desire to *fear* thy name."

There are two kinds of fear. One is the fear, which the poor slave, who has a cruel master, feels. He works, because he is afraid of being beaten and put in chains. He does not love his master, does not feel any pleasure in doing what he is told. How glad he would be to leave his master altogether, if he could. But *fear* makes him work, though he does not like it—*fear* makes his life miserable. This was the *kind* of fear, which that unprofitable servant felt, who hid his one talent in the earth. "Then he which had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering

where thou hast not strawed, and I *was afraid,* and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, *there* thou hast that is thine,'" (Matt. xxv. 24, 25.) This was the fear, which Pharaoh felt, when he said, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked," (Ex. ix. 27.) This is the fear, which Felix felt, when St. Paul preached to him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; for, we read in (Acts xxiv. 25,) that "Felix trembled." This is the fear, which St. Paul speaks of, (Rom. viii. 15,) "Ye have not received the *spirit* of *bondage* again to *fear.*" This is the fear, which love casts out, as St. John says, (1 Ep. iv. 18.) "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

The other is the fear, which an affectionate son feels towards his father. It is not a tormenting, but a reverential fear. It is mixed with love. Love does not

cast out this fear, but increases it. This was the fear, which Abraham felt, when he offered up his beloved son Isaac. What did the angel say to him? (Gen. xxii. 12,) "Now I know that thou *fearest* God." This was the fear which Isaac felt, as the remarkable name of God, which you will find (Gen. xxxi. 42) proves, "The *fear* of Isaac." This was Joseph's *fear*. He says, (Gen. xlii. 18.) "This do and live, for I *fear* God." This was the fear, then, which Nehemiah desired, when he said, "Who desire to *fear* thy name." Many beautiful things are said about this fear in the Bible. In (Ps. cxi. 10,) it is called "the beginning of wisdom." In (Prov. xiv. 27,) it is called a "fountain of life." This fear *sanctifies* the heart. "The fear of the Lord is *clean*," (Ps. xix. 9.) It *keeps* the heart. God promises, "I will put my *fear* in their hearts, that they shall *not depart* from me," (Jer. xxxii. 40.) It *preserves* from evil. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil." (Prov. viii. 13.) It is

the *crown* of holiness. St. Paul says, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," (2 Cor. vii. 1.) God *accepts* those, who fear Him; as St. Peter says, (Acts x. 35,) "In every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." God *pities* those, who fear Him. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, (Ps. ciii. 13.) God *delights* in those who fear Him. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him—in those that hope in His mercy," (Ps. cxlvii. 11.)

Now let us go on to speak of those, who *desire* to fear God.

What a beautiful expression it is: "desire to fear God." There may be some, who have been and would be afraid to say, that they fear and love God. They cannot say to Jesus, with Peter, "Thou *knowest* that I love thee;" but they *desire* and long to fear God; they *can* say, "I desire to fear Thee." If you, my dear young friend, have this desire, God will

ou to fear Him. "He will *fulfil* ire of them that fear Him," (Ps.). Who gave you the *desire* to d? God did. Will He not, then, our desire? Oh, yes, He will. hen, earnestly to Him, and say, d, Thou hast given me the *desire* Thee, now fulfil my desire, that I r and love Thee with all my heart." tell you an anecdote of a little ho *desired* to fear God. He was a tle child, when he saw his parents and after meals, put their hands r, and lift up their eyes, and give to God. One day he said to them, are you doing?" The mother said, re praying, dear child, that is, we *aking* to God." "What do you God?" asked the little boy. "W n," said the mother, "to *bless* ou nd we *thank* Him for it." The le boy said, "Dear mamma, ter pray too; I should *like* to sr l so much." So she taught

to pray, and afterwards he used to pray three times a day, with great earnestness.

But if you *desire* to fear God, you must be very careful and watchful, or else that *good* desire will grow weaker and weaker. Suppose you had to carry a lighted candle along a passage, in which there were a great many open windows on both sides, and people were throwing water about, would you not try to keep at a distance from the flying water, and put up your hand to shelter your candle, when you came to a window? Now, the *desire* to fear God, is like the lighted candle, and this world is full of temptations. Bad companions will throw water upon it, and worldly pleasures, like gusts of wind, will blow it out. Avoid, therefore, both these; and whenever your candle begins to flicker, go to God at once to light it again. Let me tell you another anecdote of a little boy. He was only four years old, and even then was very fond of saying his

catechism, and hearing the Bible read. He was generally very obedient to his parents, but one day he did something, that his father told him not to do. This made him very unhappy; he went into his room, knelt down upon his knees, and prayed to God to forgive him. Then, he rose up, and went to his parents, cheerful and happy, and said, "God has forgiven me." He *desired* to fear God.

And now let me conclude, by giving a text suited to three different states of mind. First, to you, dear reader, if you do *not* fear God, (Matt. x. 28), "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Next, to you, if you fear Him, with a slavish fear, if your conscience accuses you of sin, (Matt. xi. 28). "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And lastly, to you, if you fear God with the *fear of* love, (Mal. iii. 16, 17). "Then,

they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day, when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son, that serveth him."

THE DISCIPLES:

Or, the wish to Pray.

"LORD teach us to pray," (Luke xi. 1). What beautiful words these are—who used them? One of our Lord's disciples. Why did he use them? Because he *desired* to pray. Did Jesus listen to his request? Yes, He taught him the prayer, which we call the Lord's prayer. Is it enough, then, that we should use that prayer, or need we still to say, "Lord, teach us to pray"? You must ask God to teach you to pray, although you have most excellent prayers; for it is not enough to *say* prayers. You must understand and feel what you say. You must long to have that, which you ask for. Who is it, that enlightens our

understandings, to understand the Scriptures? Who is it, that makes us *feel* what we say? Who is it, that makes prayer come from the heart? It is the *Spirit*. Turn to (Jude ver. 20.) "Praying in the Holy Ghost"; and also to (Rom. viii. 26), "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." There are three points which I will try to explain. Will you try, my dear young friend, to remember them?

First, *when* we should pray; secondly, *how* we should pray; and thirdly, *why* we should pray.

First, *when* we should pray.

You will say, "morning and evening," and that is quite right; but we may, and ought, to pray much oftener than that. Would it not be a grief to you, if you were only allowed to talk to your parents *twice* in one day? Those who love their

parents very much, like to be with them, and talk to them about all the *little things*, in which they are interested. Just in the same way, my young friend, we ought to love to be with God, and to open our hearts to Him. Do you remember how often Daniel prayed? Three times a-day; turn to (Dan. vi. 10,) "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his window being open, in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled down upon his knees, *three times a day;* and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." How often did David pray? He tells us, (Psa. lv. 17), "Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." But he frequently, at least, prayed oftener than three times, for he says, in (Psal. cxix. 164), "Seven times a day do I praise Thee, because of thy righteous judgments." There was once a little boy, who had this spirit of prayer. He used, very

often, to go into his chamber, and throw himself upon his knees before God, and then he forgot every thing but Him, to Whom he was praying. One day, his younger brother entered his chamber, and was so touched by his earnestness in prayer, that he gave himself to God also. He would often say to his sister, "Come, and let us pray together." Pray then often, my dear reader. Do you not frequently feel, that your heart is very cold? Do you not forget God for hours together? Do you not often feel, that God is a stranger to you? And why all this? Because you do not pray enough. If you were to offer up a few words of prayer, each time, that you go into your chamber, you would remember God so much more. You would feel, that the eye of God is upon you; you would know, that God is very near you. Perhaps, when you have been travelling by railway, you have observed some thin wires running alongside, all the way. Suppose those wires were fastened to some-

thing at two places, fifty miles apart, the all the middle part would fall upon the ground, and be of no use. The wires, therefore, must be supported, and they *are* supported by means of posts. Now, our hearts are very apt to sink to the earth, just as those wires would do, if they were not supported by posts placed a few yards from each other. What *can* keep our hearts lifted up from morning to evening? Frequent prayer throughout the day. Just what those posts do for the wires, prayer at different times of the day does for the soul. It keeps it on high, and therefore happy.

Again, we should pray *when we are tempted.* It is often just at the moment that a child is tempted, that he feels least inclined to pray. Sometimes his mind is so occupied with some *bad* thought, that he does not think of *prayer at all;* or, if he does, he says to himself, "I cannot pray now; I must wait until my mind is more calm." But is it right to wait?

Oh! no; we should hasten to God the *very moment*, that we are tempted; when some bad thought comes into your mind, or some angry feeling disturbs your heart; when you are annoyed at something, that another has done, and you feel as if you *could* not forgive them, then go into your secret chamber, and kneel upon your knees before God. Ask Him to help you to overcome the sinful thought, or sinful feeling. This is a sure way to overcome a hasty temper, or any besetting sin. Try it, dear children, the next time, that you are tempted; persevere in it, and you will be sure to succeed. Your temper, if hasty now, will become gentle; if unforgiving, will become forgiving; if impatient, will become patient.

Again: we should pray for *God's blessing on every undertaking.*

When our Saviour was about to choose His twelve disciples, He spent the whole night in prayer, as we read in (Luke vi. 12, 13), "And it came to pass in those days, that

He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer unto God; and when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve." When the disciples appointed two, one of whom was to fill the place of the unhappy Judas; they also prayed, as we read (Acts i. 24), "And they prayed and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen." And when Barnabas and Saul were sent forth on their first missionary journey, the church at Antioch, fasted and prayed, as we are told in (Acts xiii. 3), "and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away;" and again, (chap. xiv. 26), "and thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled." Nehemiah too, when longing for the peace of Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of the second temple, prayed without ceasing.

When the king said to him, (Neh. ii. 4), "For what dost thou make thy request." He says, "So I prayed to the God of heaven." When then you, my young friend, undertake anything for the glory of God, remember to give yourselves to prayer. If it is some *little* thing, which you wish to do, you must not say in your hearts, "Oh! I can do that in my own strength." It may be true, that you *could* do it, but you could not do it *aright*, not so, as to be *blessed* in doing it; and, if it is some great thing beyond your own strength, then in prayer you will be encouraged. The promises of God will cheer you. Begin then, dear young reader, every undertaking with prayer, continue it in prayer, and how will you conclude it? with praise.

Lastly: we should pray to God *in times of danger.*

Do you remember any one, who prayed to God in a time of danger? Did Daniel pray, when he was cast into the den of lions? We are not told that he did, but

we cannot doubt it. Did Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego pray, when they were cast into the burning fiery furnace? We are not told that they did, and yet they must have prayed. Peter once prayed, when he was in danger; do you recollect the occasion? It was when he began to sink in the waters. He cried out, "Lord, save me." Jonah prayed, when he was in the whale's belly; as we read (Jonah ii. 1), "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God, out of the fish's belly."

Some years ago, a large piece of a mountain in Switzerland, loosened by heavy rains, fell down. In one house, which was covered with the ruins, were two children. The falling masses forced the roof of the house upon them, without, however, killing them. Though they were close together, they could not move, or render each other any assistance. But as they could hear each other speak, the eldest encouraged the youngest, whose name was Anna, to trust in Jesus, who

saw them, where no other eye could see them. Then they prayed out of their sorrowful hearts to God to save them, or give them strength to bear the trial with patience. They had scarcely finished praying, when they heard the sound of a neighbouring clock. This gave them comfort, for they thought before, that all the inhabitants of the village must have been killed. There they passed the night. Early in the morning, the eldest sister called out to little Anna, but there was no answer. Was she dead? The eldest sister thought so, and expected to die herself soon; but no, she was not dead. It must have been an uncomfortable place to sleep, yet she had fallen asleep. Francisca was so glad to find, that her little sister was still alive. Suddenly she heard another sound. What was it? It was the voice of her own father. On hearing it, she cried out as loud as she could. Her voice, though weak, reached her father's ear. He was full of joy, and re-

newed his exertions to clear away the earth. Soon both were extricated. God had heard their prayer, and answered it.

If you then, my young friend, are ever in danger, either on the sea, or on the railway, remember to pray to God; whilst others are frightened, and perhaps know not what to do, try to lift up your heart calmly to God.

Now, let us consider *how* we should pray. You should pray with the *heart*, with *all your heart*, as it says (Jer. xxix. 13), "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye search for me with *all your heart*." And as David says (Ps. cxix. 58), "I entreated Thy favour with my *whole* heart." You must pray with a *true heart*, as St. Paul says (Heb. x. 22), "Let us draw near with a true heart." You must pray in *faith*, as St. James says (i. 6), "But let him ask *in faith*, nothing wavering." You must pray with *confidence* in *God* (1 John v. 14), "And this is the confidence that we have in Him,

that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." You must pray in a *gentle and forbearing spirit* (1 Tim. ii. 8), "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands *without wrath* and doubting." You must pray with *humility* (2 Chron. vii. 14), "If My people, which are called by My name, shall *humble themselves, and pray*, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." You must pray with *boldness* (Heb. iv. 16), "Let us therefore come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." With *earnestness* (James v. 17), "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he *prayed earnestly* that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." You must pray with *perseverance* (Luke xviii. 1), "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men

ought *always to pray*, and not to faint. Prayer must ascend from a *heart* that *hates sin* (Ps. lxvi. 18), "If I *regard iniquity in my heart*, the Lord will not hear me." My dear child, do you think it a very easy thing to pray? If it was enough to *say* some prayers, which you have been taught, then it would not be difficult to pray. But if we ought, as I have said, to pray *frequently* during the day, in the time of *temptation*, in every *undertaking*, and in every *danger;* if prayer must come from the *heart*, if it must be *earnest, persevering, bold*, and yet *humble*, oh! then we *must* feel, that we need the blood of Jesus to cleanse our prayers, and the intercessions of Jesus to make them acceptable to God, and the Spirit of God to teach us to pray. You ask God, do you not, to bless you, to forgive you, and to keep you? Oh! ask Him too to *teach you to pray;* say, "Lord, teach me to pray."

We will say only a few words on the last head, *why* we should pray.

You will say, I think, because God has *told* us to pray. Yes, that is the first reason. Jesus said (Matt. vii. 7, 8,) "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

We should pray, because prayer is the breath of the soul; without prayer, the soul is, and must be, in a state of *spiritual death*. Suppose you were standing by the bed of a dying child. The chamber is all quiet and still. The little one does not speak; you do not hear her voice, but you see her breathe; whilst you watch, her breath grows shorter and feebler, then comes the last gentle breath—her spirit is gone—you say she is dead. So, if you pray from your heart to God, then the Spirit of God is within you; but if you *neglect prayer*, or say your prayers *without thinking what you are doing*, then, in the

sight of God, your soul is in a *state of death.*

We should pray, because God loves to hear our prayers. When the high priest used to approach God in His temple, he burned incense, and the whole temple was filled with a fragrant smell. Prayer is to God like *incense.* Turn to (Ps. cxli. 2), "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the *incense.*" No true prayer, even of the youngest, feeblest child, is ever lost. Jesus gathers it up. He puts it in His golden censer, and presents it to His Father.

Now, I am going to ask you a question. Will you pay great attention, and put it to your own heart? "Do *you desire* to pray?" The disciple, who said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," felt his ignorance, and *desired* to be taught to pray. Is this *your* desire, my dear young friend? If not, your heart is in a very *sad* state. If so, God will teach you to pray by His own gentle Spirit. Oh, ask Him for His

Spirit, and each time that you go into your chamber to pray, before you kneel down upon your knees, pause for one moment, and think, "I am going to pray to God." Then, look up, and say from your heart, "Lord, teach *me* to pray."

DAVID:

Or, the desire to know one's own heart.

WHAT a wonderful life David's was; and to how many dangers he was exposed! When he was young, he kept his father's flock. It must have been a quiet and happy life. Was he ever in danger then? Yes; a lion and bear attacked his sheep. Then, too, young as he was, he fought with that great giant, from whom all the Israelites ran away in a fright; and he killed him. Afterwards, Saul took him nto his court; but when he heard the people singing, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands," he was envious, and one day, in a passion, *threw a* javelin at David, and tried to kill

him. And when David fled from Saul, the envious king pursued him, and hunted him as a "partridge in the mountains." But God protected David, and after ten long years of persecution made him king. Were all his troubles over then? No; when he was old, his son Absalom rebelled against him, and again the aged king was obliged to fly from Jerusalem to save his life. In all these difficulties, there was one thing which comforted David. He almost always remembered, that *God saw him.* This enabled him to kill the lion and the bear. It gave him courage to fight with Goliath. It made him patient, when he was persecuted by Saul. It comforted him, when his own son rebelled against him. He speaks of it beautifully in (Ps. cxxxix. 1), "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me." But, perhaps, you will say, "O yes; David must have felt in those *great* dangers, that God saw him; but did he feel it, too, in all the *little* things of daily life? Yes. It

not a small thing to sit down upon a chair, and get up again? Yes; you do it almost without thought. Well, David realised, that God marked these *little* things. See what he says, (ver. 2), "Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising;" he knew, that God observed every thought of his heart, and every word of his lips. In (ver. 2), he says, "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off;" and (ver. 4), "There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo! O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Oh, if you are ever tempted to keep bad thoughts in your heart, remember, that *God sees them.* If you ever use bad words, know *thou* this, that God hears them, and puts them *every one* down in the book of His remembrance.

But did David like to be *seen,* and *searched* by God in this way? Yes; for whilst he says in (ver. 1), "Thou hast searched me," he prays in (ver. 23), "Search me, O God." What made him like it? He had a good *desire* in his heart.

Can you think what it was? Perhaps you will say, "Yes; he wished to *go to heaven*; for he prays (ver. 24), "Lead me in the way everlasting." That is true, but it is not the desire I mean. Another may say, "he wished to be *better* than he was." That is also true, but *that* is not the wish I mean. The desire which David felt, and about which I am going to speak to you, was the desire to *know his own heart*. May you, my dear young friend, have this blessed desire, and pray that you may *know your own heart*. Lift up a silent prayer to God now, and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart."

There are three points which I will try to explain to you.

1. *Why* we should search our hearts.
2. *How* we should search them.
3. *When* we should search them.

1. "Why we should search our hearts." There are many reasons why we should do so. It will be sufficient to mention three simple and plain ones.

First, then, we should search them, because they are *very deep* and *dark*. What a number of dreadful things come out of the heart! All the quarrels—all the falsehoods—all the bad words—all the doubts of God's love—all the things spoken against Him—come out of the heart. Turn to (Matt. xv. 19), "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." If all these dark things come out of the *heart*, how deep and dark *it must* be *itself*. Now, suppose a procession were made in London of all the poorest and half-starved people. The shocked spectators would exclaim, when looking at their rags and misery, "Oh, what miserable *dwellings these* must have!" So when we look at the dark things, that come out of man's heart, what can we feel but this? It must be a very *deep* and *dark* place. People do not generally think *their own* hearts so *very dark*, and the reason is, because they do not *know*

them; they have not *searched* them, or asked God to *search* them. Pray, then, "Search me, O God." There was once a little boy, who was led by the Spirit of God to search his own heart? What did he think of it? He said one day to his sister, "Oh, I have a wicked, wicked heart. It would be hell enough for me, though there was no other;" and then he added, "but there are no wicked hearts in heaven." Often he used to pray, "Come, Holy Spirit, and make me holy, make me like Jesus."

2. Our hearts are not only *deep* as the deep sea, and *dark* as the night, but very deceitful too. Can you prove this from Scripture? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9). Turn also to (Isa. xliv. 20), "He feedeth on ashes, a *deceived heart* hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, and say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'"

For one more proof refer to (Heb. iii.

12, 13), "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, whilst it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Do you remember any persons in the Bible, whose hearts deceived them? There was once a king of Syria, whose name was Benhadad. He became very ill, and as he was very anxious, as some sick people are, to know whether he would recover, he sent a man of the name of Hazael to enquire of the prophet Elisha, whether he would die or not. Elisha answered the question, and then looked stedfastly at Hazael and wept. Then Hazael said, "Why weepeth my lord?" and he answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strongholds thou wilt set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with thy sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child." Hazael was amazed; he

could not believe that he should ever be guilty of such sins. If you will turn to (2 Kings viii. 13), you will see what he said. "But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Did he do it? Yes. The next day he murdered his master. Oh, how Hazael's heart *deceived* him! Can you think of another, whose heart *deceived* him? Who was it, that once said to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended?" and yet afterwards denied our Lord? It was Peter. His heart *deceived* him.

As, then, our hearts are so *deceitful*, we ought to *search* them carefully; we should often pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." But there is one more reason, why we should search our own hearts—it is this, that unless we know *them*, we can never know *Christ*; for Christ is the great physician. Now, would you ever send for a physician, when you are strong and well? No: it is the sick, the

sick alone, who send for one. So, if you think that your heart is *good*, and hope, that God will take you to heaven, because you are good, you will not care for Jesus. And so, the Saviour, speaking of Himself, said, "They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," (Matt. ix. 12). But when we look deep into our own hearts, and see how very very sinful they are, and that because our hearts are sinful, our lives are sinful too, oh, then we feel, "No one but Jesus can save *me*—nothing but His white robe can cover *me*—nothing but His precious blood can wash away *my* sins—nothing but His Spirit can change *my* heart." Then, we have very low thoughts of *ourselves*, and very high thoughts of *Jesus*. And as it is so good to know Christ, it must be also good to know our own hearts. "Search me, O God, and know my heart."

Now, let us go on to see *how* we should search our hearts.

Suppose that you wanted to see something in a cave, but it was quite dark, what would you do? You would get a light, and then you could examine all the corners of the cave, and see what is in it. So, in order to see and know your own hearts, you want a *light*. But where can you get it? Can your teachers give it you? No. God only can give it you. David felt this, and that is the reason why he prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Ask God, then, dear child, to search your heart, and then you will be able to search it too by the light, which God gives. Ask Him to *shine* into your hearts, as St. Paul says (2 Cor. iv. 6), "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," and then you will see clearly your besetting sins. The Spirit of God is light, and like light, He makes us feel our own darkness.

Again; suppose you were learning to draw, your teacher would give you a copy; and you would try to imitate it as closely as you could, would you not? And when you had finished the drawing, if you wished to know, whether it was correct or not, you would compare it, stroke by stroke, with the copy; and, perhaps, on looking at it carefully, you would say, "This stroke is too crooked—that part is too dark." Now *God* teaches *us* in the *same* way. He has given us a copy. Do you know what it is? It is Jesus Christ. Turn to (1 Pet. ii. 21), where it says, that Christ suffered for us, "*leaving us an example*, that we should follow His steps;" and so St. Paul says (Eph. v. 1), "Be ye, therefore, *followers* or *imitators* of God, as dear children." Jesus Christ, then, is your *copy*; and in order to see what your heart and life ought to be, you must look at Jesus Christ. Two things must be searched together—the Bible, and our own hearts. The Bible, to see how holy Jesus

was and is; our own hearts, to see how unlike they are to Jesus.

And then, when you find out something in your heart and life, that has been wrong, some besetting sin, what should you do? Bring it to Jesus, that it may be washed out in His crimson blood, and pray to God to enable you to overcome it. My dear young friend, do you know enough of your own heart to see what your besetting sin is? What is it? Have you bad thoughts in your heart? Then pray with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," (Ps. li. 10). Are you passionate? Then pray, "O God, make me gentle and patient." Are you proud? Then say, "O God, clothe me with humility." Are you self-willed, and too fond of having your own way? Pray for an obedient and submissive spirit. Do you talk too much, without thinking what you say? Then ask God to help you to "bridle your tongue." Have you ever told a lie? Oh, pray for forgiveness, and ask

God to give you courage always to speak the truth.

This, then, my dear child, is *how* you should search your own heart. Ask God to give you light. Compare yourself, not with other children, but with Jesus; and as soon as you discover your sins, confess them to God at once, and pray for pardon and strength. What was the third head? Do you remember? It was this—*when* should we search our hearts?

One of the *best* times is at night, before you go to bed. When all is quiet and still, and you are alone with God, then look back on the day past, and ask yourself these questions, "Have I read the Bible, and applied it to my heart to-day? Have I prayed to God, and really desired to have what I prayed for? Have I thought of God, and tried to please Him throughout the day? Have I felt, that my time is precious, and tried to make the most of it? Have I been obedient to my parents and teachers? Have I been cross and

passionate with my brothers or sisters? Have I spoken without thinking first what I was going to say? When you put these and other questions to your own heart, listen between each, and hear what conscience says; and whenever it condemns you, do not try to escape from its still small voice, but carry your sin to Jesus, that it may be forgiven. The evening, then, just before you go to bed, is a good time to *search* your heart. David himself, seems to have searched his heart at night; for he says, "I call to remembrance my song in the *night;* I commune with my own heart, and my spirit made diligent *search,*" (Psal. lxxvii. 6). But, perhaps you have tried to do this, but you find that at night you *forget* many things, that you have done during the day. Then, you must try to be more watchful during the day. Take notice of every thing that you *do,* and *say,* and *feel.* Never say in your heart, "I wont think of this *now*: I will think of it when

I go to bed." Watch your heart all through the day, and lay up in your memory any sin, that you commit at the *very time*, and then you will be able to remember it in the evening.

My dear young friend, are you like David? do you *desire* to know your own *heart?* Perhaps, some are saying within themselves, "No, I wish to be happy, and if I knew my own heart, I should not be happy." That is quite wrong; none are really happy but those, who *know* their own hearts; for they learn to know Jesus too. It is true that they find a great many sins within them, but they bring them all to Jesus, and He washes them away in His own blood, and leads them in the way everlasting. Oh how happy they are; Jesus is their *physician*—their *Saviour*, their *friend*. When they die, He will go with them through the valley of the shadow of death, and they will be with Jesus for ever, and cast their crowns throughout eternity at His feet. Pray

then with David, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

PHILIP;

Or, the desire to know the Father.

Do you remember the name of the little town, where Philip lived? You will find it, if you turn to (John i. 44). It was Bethsaida, and is situated at the north end of the sea of Galilee. Andrew and Peter lived there also. Perhaps they knew Philip, before they all knew Jesus, but we are not told so. One day, Jesus went to Galilee, and He found Philip, and said to him, "Follow Me." It was not by *accident*, that Jesus found him, oh! no. He went on *purpose* to *find* him, and to save his soul. So, Jesus comes now, my dear young friend, to *find you*, and to save your precious soul. To *you*, He says,

"Follow *Me.*" Listen! do you not hear His still small voice speaking to your heart, now this moment?—oh, what does He say? "Follow *Me.*" Perhaps some child may say, "But, I am too young, I *cannot* follow Jesus yet." No, you are not; children of three years old have followed Jesus. Another may say, "My heart is too wicked; I must wait, till it grows better, before I follow Jesus." No, that is quite wrong. If you wait, your heart will grow *worse* instead of better. Come to Jesus *now*, and He will forgive your sins, and give you a new heart. What did Philip do? He followed Jesus. It does not say so, but we know that he did; for he went directly and found a friend of his, Nathaniel, and said to him very joyfully, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." This is a beautiful example for a Christian child. Do you know and love Jesus? Then *you* should try, by kindness, by gentleness, by

love, by prayer, and by your words, to lead your companions to Jesus.

There was once a little child, whose parents lived for some time in India. They had a servant, an old man, whose name was Sammy. He was a heathen, but as he was kind and faithful, he often took care of the little child in her walks. One day they walked through a large wood, where there was a heathen temple. The Hindoo slave, on seeing it, left the little child for a few minutes, and prayed to an idol, which was placed over the door of the temple. Afterwards, he returned to the little child, who said to him, "Why did you do that?" "Oh, that is my god," said the slave. "Your god," said the child, "*your* god! Your god cannot see, cannot hear, cannot walk; your god is only a stone, but *my God* sees everything." Still, the poor ignorant man went on worshipping idols, and the little child always told him how wrong it was. The time was now approaching, when this

family was to leave India. The poor slave was very sorry, for he loved the little child, though she *did* tell him how sinful it was to worship idols. He said, "When you go to England, what shall I do? for, I have got no father and mother." The child answered, "O Sammy, if you loved *my* God, *He* would be your father and mother." The old man promised, with tears in his eyes, "That he would love *her* God." "Then," she said, "you must learn my prayers," and she actually taught him the Lord's Prayer, the creed, and her own morning and evening prayers. From that time, the old slave's heart was changed, and he soon became a true Christian.

Philip led Nathaniel to Jesus; and this little child, young as she was, brought a Hindoo slave to Jesus. What made her so like Philip? The Spirit of God. The same Spirit dwelt in the hearts of both. My dear young friend, if you do not love Jesus, you can *never* be useful; but if you

do, you may be the means of making others happy also.

Does the Bible tell us anything more about Philip? Yes. Turn to (John vi. 5), "Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, and said unto Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Why did Jesus, who had all power in heaven and earth, ask such a question? It was to try Philip. How did he stand the trial? Did he say, "Lord, Thou art able to prepare a table for them here in this mountain"? No; he began to think of difficulties; he said (v. 7), "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."

We read of Philip again in (ch. xii. 20), "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast." These Greeks heard about Jesus, and were anxious to see Him. To whom did they go to inquire? To Philip. "The same came therefore to Philip, which was

of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'" What a beautiful wish! "to see Jesus." God gave them that wish, and, as Philip was so anxious to save souls, God guided these Greeks to him. What did Philip do? He went and consulted Andrew, and then they both went to Jesus and told Him. There is only one more passage, in which we read about Philip, and that is (John xiv. 8), where he himself made the striking request to Christ, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." There was much that was beautiful and true in this request, and there was something wrong also. Let me try to explain to you how far it was right, and where it was wrong.

"Show us the Father." This short prayer expresses the deepest longings of all God's people at all times. This was Moses's desire, as you will see if you turn to (Exodus xxxiii. 18), "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." What does this mean but show me *Thyself?* The next

verse proves it; God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Moses then desired to see God. This was Job's desire in his affliction. "Oh that I knew where I *might find Him,* that I might come even to His seat (ch. xxiii. 3). And again (v. 8, 9), "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." This was David's desire. "There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." (Ps. iv. 6.) This was the desire of a little boy, who lived many years ago in Germany. He was very clever; even when he was only five years old, he knew a great deal of the Bible, and could repeat a great

part of the sermons, which he heard. Could *you* do so? He was remarkable for his great earnestness in prayer, and never seemed so happy, as when his mother took him into her room to pray with him. There were some passages of Scripture, which touched his little heart very much. One of these was (Rev. vii. 17), "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Another was (Matt. xi. 28), "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." One day a person said, in his presence, that a little child, who lived near, had just died; and some one present said, "How dreadful!" "No," said the little boy, "you should not say, that it is dreadful. It is a *joyful* thing, when God takes a little child to be with Him in heaven." On another occasion he wished his mother to give him something, but he prayed beforehand

to God to make him quite contented, if his mother should say, "No." But he did not live long. Soon after, he was seized with a painful sickness, and said to his mother, "Now I shall soon go to the heavenly paradise, and angels will carry my soul into Abraham's bosom." When he saw his mother weeping by his bed-side, he said to her, "Do not weep, dearest mamma, God does all things well." Soon after, he died very peacefully, and now his prayers are fully answered, and he "knows God even as he is known."

My dear young friend, you have had *many* wishes; but have you ever had *this wish*, to *know God?* You have heard of God *very often*, by the hearing of the ear, but have you longed to *see* God with the eye of faith. You have said very many prayers, hundreds and hundreds; but do you pray, not with the lips only, but from your heart, "Lord, show me the Father." When you kneel upon your knees to-night, and all is quiet, and God's eye is

fixed upon you, and His ear is open to your prayer, then lift up your hearts very earnestly and solemnly with this prayer, "Lord, show me the Father." Do you wish to be happy, whilst you live? do you wish to be peaceful, when you die? do you wish to be still happier after death? then keep on offering up this beautiful prayer, until you feel that it is answered, and that you *do* know God. How happy you will be then! Some people think, if I only had a little more money, how contented I should be. Are they right? Oh, no; what does Solomon say, (Prov. xi. 4), "riches profit not in the day of wrath." Another says, if "I could but have that *one* thing, it is all that I desire. Another thinks, if I could but be without this *one* anxiety, I should be satisfied. Satisfied! There is one thing only, my dear child, that *can* satisfy your heart and mine. It is the *knowledge of God.* Philip knew this, and said, "Shew us the Father, and it *sufficeth* us." The *favour*

of God satisfies. "O Naphtali, *satisfied with favour,* and full with the blessing of the Lord," (Deut. xxxiii. 23). The *mercy* of God satisfies. "O satisfy us early with Thy *mercy*, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days," (Psal. xc. 14). The promised *blessings of God's house* satisfy. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the *fatness* of *Thy house:* and Thou shalt make them drink the rivers of Thy pleasures," (Psal. xxxvi. 8). The *likeness* of God satisfies. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake with *Thy likeness,*" (Psal. xvii. 15). The *goodness* of God satisfies. "And I will satiate the souls of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my *goodness,*" saith the Lord, (Jer. xxxi. 14). Do you wish to have a happy and satisfied heart? Then remember that *riches* cannot satisfy you. The *praise of men* cannot satisfy you; your *own way* cannot satisfy you; *sin* cannot satisfy you; even

the *love* of parents and dear friends cannot satisfy you. One, and one alone, can *satisfy* you—that is, God. His forgiving love can take away your guilt. His peace can fill your heart. Thirst then after God, and your soul shall be satisfied. Turn to (Psal. lxiii. 1), "My soul *thirsteth* for Thee; and compare it with (ver. 5), "My soul shall be *satisfied* as with marrow and fatness." If you have a *proud* heart, God will not satisfy you. A proud heart is always restless. It is the *meek* and *broken* heart, that God loves to satisfy. "The *meek* shall eat, and be *satisfied*," (Psal. xxii. 26). Oh, pray then with Philip, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." What a beautiful prayer then this was. Could there be anything wrong in it? Yes, there must have been something wrong, because Jesus said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" What *was* Philip's mistake? The following words show, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen

the Father, and how sayest thou then, show us the Father." Philip, then, was quite *right* in wishing to see the Father. He was *wrong* in not knowing, that Jesus manifested the Father; so that, when he saw Jesus, he saw the Father; when he knew Jesus, he knew the Father; when he loved Jesus, he loved the Father. There are many passages of Scripture which prove this; turn to (Col. i. 15), and see what St. Paul calls Christ, "The image of the invisible or unseen God." Compare (Heb. i. 3), "Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." Refer to (2 Cor. iv. 6), "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face—that is, in the person—of Jesus Christ!" and hence it is, that Jesus is called "the *way*" to the Father: "I am the *way*, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Hence Jesus is said to *de-*

clare the Father, "He hath *declared* Him," (John i. 18). To *manifest* the Father, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world," (John xvii. 6). To *reveal* Him: "neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will *reveal* Him," (Matt. xi. 27.)

Dear reader, do not make the same mistake, that Philip made. He ought to have known, that to know *Christ* was to know *God;* and you ought never to forget, that there is only one way to God—by the blood of Jesus; only one way of knowing God—to know Jesus. The Saviour had been teaching Philip a long time, and yet he did not know this. Are not those words very touching? "Have I been so *long time* with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" But Jesus has been still longer with you, however young you may be. You were given up to Him in your baptism; you have heard of Him from your teachers and ministers. You have read of

Him in your Bibles: when you kneel upon your knees, He is near—when you go to the house of prayer, you are in His presence. He knocks at the door of your young heart. He has watched over you in infancy and childhood, and has, perhaps, raised you from a bed of sickness. My dear child, do *you* love Jesus, do *you* know Jesus? He has done all this for you—do you *love* Him? Oh! what a *hard*, what a sinful, what an unthankful heart yours must be, if you do *not love* Him. Jesus must be saying to you now, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?"

Do you understand now the prayer, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us"? Do you understand how God answers it? He shows us Jesus, and in Jesus we know *Him*.

MOSES;

Or, the desire to be satisfied with Mercy.

WHEN Moses was journeying through the wilderness, he saw some dreadful things. Once, the earth opened, and swallowed up a great many people. Do you remember the names of any of them? Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then a dreadful plague broke out, and fourteen thousand and seven hundred died. On another occasion, he saw the fiery serpents bite the murmuring Israelites. But he saw wonderful things too. He saw the waters of the Red Sea part, and open a way for God's people. He saw Amalek overcome, when he lifted up his hands in prayer. How many sad things must have

been in the thoughts of Moses, when he said, (Ps. xc. 3) "Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, return ye children of men." Are you well to-day? God may make you ill to-morrow; and there are some, now lying on a sick-bed, whom God may soon make well.

But do you remember, how God fed Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness? Yes, I think you will say, "God fed them with manna." Asaph speaks of this, (Ps. lxxviii. 24, 25). What does he call it? The "corn of heaven," and "angel's food." Did this satisfy them? No: for "man doth not live by bread alone." So Moses prays (v. 14) for something, which *could* satisfy them. "O satisfy us early with Thy *mercy*, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

Do you understand, my dear young friend, what *mercy* means? Let me explain it. Near the top of a bleak and lofty mountain in Switzerland, above 8,000 feet above the level of the sea, where

there is nothing but bare and savage rocks, and not a single tree, there is a house called an "hospice," in which ten good men live. They fear not the winter storm, or the snow, which last year was twenty-four feet deep around their dwelling. Why do they live there? Because, during the winter, numbers of poor people try to cross that mountain to get into the valleys beyond: many have been swept away by falling masses of snow—many have sunk down exhausted, and been frozen to death. These ten men live there to help and rescue the perishing; and they go out day by day, in the cold winter and in the midst of the deep snow, and when they find some exhausted traveller, they carry him to their hospice, and feed and clothe him. What makes those devoted men leave the warm valleys, to live in that bleak and desolate place, where the cold of August is like our January? It is *mercy*, a merciful spirit—compassion for the perishing. What, then, is mercy

in God? It is *that* in God, which leads Him to pardon the guilty, and to help the miserable. Do you think, that you will be able to remember this explanation of *mercy?* The Bible speaks beautifully about God's mercy. It tells us that "His mercy is everlasting" (Ps. c. 5); that it is *rich* and abundant in measure. "God who is *rich* in mercy." (Ephes. ii. 4.) That it is *tender* in quality. "The Lord is very pitiful and of *tender* mercy," (James v. 11.) It speaks of the *greatness* of God's mercy. "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the *greatness* of Thy *mercy,*" (Numbers xiv. 19.) Of the *multitude* of His mercy. "But as for me, I will come into Thy house, in the *multitude* of Thy *mercy,*" (Ps. v. 7). The mercy of God is *promised* mercy. "To perform the *mercy promised* to our fathers," (Luke i. 72). It is *prepared* mercy. "O *prepare mercy* and truth, which may preserve him," (Ps. lxi. 7). God *shews* His mercy.

"*Shewing mercy* unto thousands of them that love Me," (Exodus xx. 6). He *magnifies* it. "Thou hast *magnified* Thy *mercy*," (Gen. xix. 19). He *delights* in it. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage; He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He *delighteth* in mercy," (Micah vii. 18). He remembers it. "In wrath *remember mercy*," (Hab. iii. 2). *Mercy* watches over all the paths of the Lord. "All the paths of the Lord are *mercy* and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies," (Ps. xxv. 10). It *follows* the true Christian. "Surely goodness and *mercy* shall *follow* me all the days of my life," (Ps. xxiii. 6). It *compasses* him about. "He that trusteth in the Lord, *mercy* shall *compass* him about," (Ps. xxxii. 10). It *leads* him. "Thou, in *Thy mercy*, hast *led* forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy

holy habitation," (Exodus xv. 13). It *holds* him up. "When I said, my foot slippeth, Thy *mercy*, O Lord, *held* me up," (Ps. xciv. 18). It does not *depart* from him. "But My *mercy* shall not *depart* away from him," (2 Sam. vii. 15).

And what effect, dear child, should the mercy of God have upon us? We should come to the *throne* of *grace* for it. "Let us therefore *come* boldly unto the *throne* of *grace*, that we may *obtain mercy*." (Heb. iv. 16.) We should trust in it. "I *trust* in the *mercy* of God for ever and ever, (Ps. lii. 8.) We should *hope* in it. "Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that *hope* in His mercy." (Ps. xxxiii. 18.) We should fear to lose it. "Is His *mercy clean gone* for ever?" (Ps. lxxvii. 8.) We should *look* for it. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, *looking* for the *mercy* of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jude 21.) We should be glad in it. "I will be *glad* and *rejoice* in Thy *mercy*." (Ps. xxxi. 7.) We should

sing of it. "But I will *sing* of Thy power, yea, I will *sing aloud* of Thy *mercy* in the morning: for Thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble." (Ps. lix. 16.) But, my dear reader, before you can *trust* and *hope*, and *rejoice* in God's mercy, you must feel your *need* of it—you must feel, that your heart is very very sinful, and that you deserve God's terrible wrath, and not His tender and abundant mercy. You must pray, as the publican prayed, "God be merciful unto me a sinner." And where then must you look for God's mercy? In Jesus, only in Jesus, only at the foot of His cross, only in the fountain of His precious blood, only through His intercession. You must not hope to find mercy, because your heart is *good*. You need it, because your heart is sinful. You must not think, that you can go straight to God with such a sinful and polluted heart as yours—you must come to Him *through* Jesus. Jesus will wash

you in His own blood—will put a new and beautiful robe of righteousness upon you, and will go with you into the Father's presence. Will God cast you out then? No. God will see His own dear Son's robe upon you, and will say to you, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." You will obtain *mercy*. Never, never, dear child, try to go *alone* into the presence of God. Suppose you were going into the presence of an earthly king, would you not wish your father, or some friend, to go with you? Ask, then, Jesus to be your friend, and to go with you into the presence of the King of kings; then *mercy* will *lead* you, and *follow* you, and *compass* you about.

One of the texts to which I have referred, speaks of God "*shewing* mercy," and another, of God "*preparing* mercy." But Moses does not say in his prayer, "*shew* us early Thy mercy;" nor does he say, "*Prepare* mercy for us." What does he say? He says, "*satisfy* us early with Thy mercy." You know, I dare say, what "*satisfy*"

means? Have you not, sometimes, felt a craving for food, as if there were a void within you, and then, when you have had something to eat, what have you felt? "*Satisfied.*" Now, your soul requires food, as well as your body. Can a person's body be in a starved state? So can his soul; and when the soul gets its *proper* food, then it is *satisfied.* Now, you know what kind of food you like for the body, but do you know what food will satisfy the soul? People, both young and old, make *great* mistakes here. Some think, "Oh, when I am a little older, then I shall enjoy the pleasures of the world." Will these satisfy the soul? Never, never. Some think, "If I had but a little more money, to be able to buy what I like, then I should be quite happy." Others think, "If I could but indulge this desire — this *one* desire of my heart, then I should be satisfied." Another, again, thinks, "If such a person were my friend, and cared for me, then I should want

nothing more." Oh, yes, you would. The world, money, sin, and earthly love, have *never filled* one immortal soul; and not one, or all of them, could fill yours. Your heart would be restless still. What, then, can and will fill the soul? Jesus can satisfy it. When I rest on Jesus, as my Saviour, and feed on Jesus, as the bread of life, then I am satisfied. When I obtain mercy in Him, and the forgiveness of all my sins, oh, then I am satisfied! Moses knew what would satisfy his soul, and the souls of his people, when he prayed so beautifully, "O *satisfy* us early with Thy mercy."

Let me tell you a story:—There was once a little boy, whose name was Johnson. When he was at school, his master made him and the other pupils repeat, on Mondays, a part of the previous day's sermon. One Monday, this little boy could remember nothing but a text, which the minister had quoted in his sermon. It was, "Call upon Me in the

day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," (Psal. iv. 15). His teacher rebuked him so severely, that he never forgot the text afterwards. Time passed away, he grew up, became a mechanic, and married. At the time of the war, provisions were very dear, and his wages were not enough to support him; he was nearly starved, and his wife wept from hunger. One day, a text of Scripture struck his mind all at once. What do you think it was? "Call upon me." But then he thought, "can *I* call upon God, will He deliver me, so great a sinner?" Oh, how unhappy he was; he had nothing in this world, and could look for nothing but misery in the next. In this state of mind he went one evening into a church. A missionary preached on the love of Jesus, and said: "Is there a sinner here weighed down under the burden of sin? If so, let him come to Jesus, for He has said, 'Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you

rest.' This came home to his heart. He believed in Jesus, left his burden at the foot of the cross, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; he was 'satisfied with mercy,' and though, as a devoted missionary, he had afterwards many hardships to endure, he rejoiced, and was glad all his days."

But there is one more word in the verse, which I wish you to observe. I mean the word "early." Moses does not merely say "satisfy us with Thy mercy," but "satisfy us *early* with Thy mercy." He longed to be satisfied, not at some future time, but *speedily*, and *at once*, without any delay. You remember the beautiful promise in (Prov. viii. 17). "I love them that love me, and those that seek me *early* shall find me." David, too, seemed to have loved this word "*early*." He says, "Awake up my glory, awake psaltery and harp; I myself will awake *early*," (Ps. lvii. 8). And, "O God, Thou art my God, *early* will I seek Thee," (Ps. lxiii. 1).

So also Isaiah says, (ch. xxvi. 9). "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee *early*." Oh, seek, then, Jesus *now*, seek Him *early*, before your sins multiply, and your heart is hardened. Seek Him *early*, and He will give you something better than the world, even *Himself*—something better than the pleasures of sin, even a *holy* and *happy heart*—something better than money, even an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Do your past sins make you unhappy? Seek Him *early*, and He will blot them all out. Do you feel your heart prone to evil? Seek Him *early*, and He will give you a "new heart and a new spirit." Do you feel the power of some besetting sin in your heart? It may be envy, or deceit, or falsehood, or a passionate temper, or obstinacy, or evil speaking. Oh, seek Jesus *early*, and His Spirit will enable you to overcome that sin, whatever it may be. Seek Him *early*,

and God, who cannot lie, has promised, that you shall *find* Him; and when you *find* Him, you shall "be satisfied with mercy," and "rejoice and be glad all your days."

THE END.

By the same Author,

SERMONS TO CHILDREN.